The Wondering Jew

Reflections on the Paradoxes of Anti-Semitism

By M. E. Ravage

We of the Western nations have had the Jew among us for a considerable while, but he remains for us to this day a rather hazy figure.

It would be so much more to our liking if he fitted into a mold, if he could be classified, and once for all pigeonholed and forgotten. He has a name of his own to go by, and that is convenient. But we really have not the remotest idea what the thing called Jewishness is. We have been bandying the word about all these generations, but, after all our slipshod efforts, we have not put our finger on the reality behind the word, if such reality exists. Jewishness is anything you like. It is also anything you dislike. It is a religion, a nationality, a race, a tradition; it is a code of commercial immorality and the radical foe of commercialism; it is the mother of Christianity and the stepmother of Christianity; it is Jesus and *Shylock* and Karl Marx rolled into one. Ask a Jew what Jewishness is, and you will get every variety of answer. There are so many kinds of Jew! The old men of the Ghetto cry vehemently that it is their faith. Their youthful offspring say it is a misfortune. The Zionists see in it nothing but a renascent nationalism, and the young gentlemen in the colleges cherish it principally as a cultural inheritance.

Rather bewildering to an outsider, all this. What is it that makes a Jew when the thing that is supposed to distinguish him is so elastic? Is there really such a man? The one thing certain is that he is a bundle of contradictions. The Jew has no country of his own, yet there is no country without him. There is no Jewish language, and there is no language on earth that some Jews do not speak. They fight under every flag, and that means of course that they fight against every flag. They are foreigners everywhere and strangers nowhere. Even in America, where they are citizens, there is a distinction between Jews and Americans. Their reputation for riches is proverbial, yet no people is so destitute in the mass. I suppose there is still a Jewish religion, but it would surprise you to find out how many Jews do not share it. And there is hardly a creed that does not find the Jew among its adherents.

What surely puzzles his friends most is that he is so little loved by his fellows. Why, it is he who invented and proclaimed the doctrine of brotherly love, which the whole world has adopted and made its own; and yet he, of all people, is excluded from its

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application! It is a good deal as if Thomas A. Edison were to be denied the use of a gramophone, as if Emma Goldman were to be excluded from a communist Utopia. Why is it, ask some kindly Western people, that in the ages when Christianity was supreme, and in those feudal countries where it still is supreme, the Jew was hated and hounded, when Christianity was so clearly Jewish in origin, and when nobody—as now—really knew what a Jew was?

Well, there are many answers to the question, but the simplest one is that they did know. I was myself born and reared in a half-medieval country of eastern Europe, and my rather vivid recollection is that we were very shabbily treated, and that we did not greatly mind it, because we knew precisely the reason for it. We were Jews, and being a Jew in that simple far-off world was a very definite and very wicked thing. It was not, to be sure, as wicked as it was sometimes made out to be. All the same, the line between Jew and non-Jew was clearly drawn, and neither side had any doubt as to what the essence of the difference was. Our peasant neighbors were not profound philosophers, but it needed no great profundity to understand that the main fact about a Jew was that he was not a Christian. It was a matter of simple definition. The Jews might or might not be guilty of mixing the blood of Christian children with their unleavened cakes, but they were unquestionably guilty of eating unleavened cakes. And that was enough. Even the simplest-minded Christian was hardly so simple as to think that any living Jew had had anything to do with the crucifixion of his Lord, but what he was most painfully aware of was that no living Jew made any secret of denying the resurrection of his Lord. And for that insolence no punishment and no persecution could be severe enough.

We all understood this from the time we were mere children, that the heathen's quarrel with us was a quarrel about religion. And the discomforts we were made to endure were lightened by the realization that that was exactly our quarrel with him. If he did not waste any love on us, neither did we lavish any on him. We were both quite genuinely convinced of the righteousness of religious persecution. If a man is not going to hate another on account of his faith, what will he ever hate him for? And if we could have had our neighbor where he had us, we never doubted but that we would have treated him precisely as he was treating us.

Indeed, we entertained a profound hope that some day we would have him there; and that again made his ministrations somewhat easier to bear. We constantly carried about with us a vision of the great time when our long penance would be over and the God of our fathers would once more receive us into His favor. For the time being we were in distress because we were expiating the heavy transgressions of Israel against His name. But the splendid deliverance was not far off. Any moment the Lord might soften toward us. And then the Messiah, His anointed, would come riding on a white horse, and He would sound His great ram's horn trumpet, and we would all gather and follow Him over a long paper bridge, which, by a wondrous miracle, we would cross

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without fear and without mishap. The pleasantest part of the promised adventure would be that our enemies, in their panic, would likewise attempt to follow Him, but they would be forced to walk over a steel bridge, which would collapse just as they reached the middle of it, and the cruelest of them would fall to destruction, while the remainder would be permitted to arrive at their destination, namely, the outer court of Jehovah's royal palace, only in order that they might witness with hungry eyes the great feast that the divine Father had prepared for His chosen children. And from that time on we, their erstwhile victims, would rule over them forever and ever, after the fashion that they themselves had taught us. A childish picture, I grant you, but we believed in it devoutly, and it served to make the inconveniences of our exile humanly tolerable.

For the inconveniences of a Jew's life in eastern Europe were by no means trifling or imaginary. They were very numerous and very serious. They cut into every chamber of our lives. They bounded us on all sides like a fence without a gate. The state did its official share with a thoroughness and a devotion that contrasted rather strikingly with its customary shoddiness and feebleness, and what little it had overlooked was quite ably attended to by the private zeal of the citizenship. To begin with, we were foreigners. It did not matter that we had never been out of our village and that our ancestors had lived there for generations back. The Balkan idea of citizenship has nothing to do with birth. It is an affair of blood and faith. Anyhow, being a foreigner without an ambassador to report one's grievances to meant no end of discriminations. We could lease landed property, but we could not buy it. We were free to engage in commerce, but as long as the Government was taking care to control by monopoly the most profitable branches of trade, our liberty in this direction was principally a spiritual asset. For similar reasons we need not bother to offer our services to the community's post-office or to its police force or to its public railways. For this, however, there was ample compensation in the privilege which was granted us of serving in the army (as privates, of course). Considering that this was one of those favors that one could not decline without causing displeasure to the benefactor and retaliation upon the beneficiary, we would not have complained if we had been deprived of it. The law forbade us residence in the country, but mercifully left the towns open to us. There was no law against our sending our children to the public schools, but somehow we never seemed able to apply at the proper time; so that it was nobody's fault but our own if the principals seldom found room for them. And always there hung over us the unspeakable terror of possible raids on our houses of worship and our private schools by a fun-loving population in quest of light entertainment, which diversions more than once unluckily got out of control and developed into riots, "riots" being in that portion of the world a politer word for massacres. But since accidents of this sort seldom occurred except in the solemn seasons of Christmas and Easter, precautions were not impossible, and none but the over-sensitive ever thought of complaining too loudly.

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Outside of religion the ill-will of our neighbors was directed against us as traders. And this, again, was not hard to understand. The great masses of the population were peasants who toiled night and day and summer and winter like animals in the fields. It was quite natural that they who lived in mud huts and subsisted on black bread and cabbage should be unkindly disposed toward those who took their ease in clean, comfortable, well lighted brick houses and indulged in meat and white loaves every day, to say nothing of such delicacies as tea and sugar and such luxuries as caned chairs and feather-beds and oil-lamps. Besides, when autumn came and the wretched slave of the soil had at last the product of a weary year in his hands to do, as he fondly believed, what he liked with, he found himself cornered by the robbers of the towns and ordered to stand and deliver. The Jews had him going and coming. He had wheat and barley to sell; the Jews were the only grain merchants. He lacked muslin and shoes and farm implements; the dry-goods shops were all owned by Jews. He was soullessly cheated at both ends. Naturally, his affection for the Jew did not materially increase, when, after a gay night of urban reveling (in an inn kept by a Jew) he sobered up somewhere on the country road and suddenly became aware that he had no produce and very little money. Of course he blamed it all on the Jew. Not being an expert in political economy, he could not know that it was an abstract thing called commerce that had mulcted him so; that commerce in the land of his devotion was but another name for brigandage; that he would have fared no better at the hands of a member of the Orthodox church than he had with a member of the Orthodox synagogue; and that the Jew's monopoly of trade was not of his own choosing, but had been forced upon him by a wise government, in which he, the peasant, had a vote, and the Jew had none. He knew nothing of all this. He only knew that he had no money for seed corn, and that the Jew had it to buy dainties with. He was too resentful to worry his head about remote possibilities, such as what a fellow-Christian would have done to him in the Jew's place. Fellow-Christians were too plain and too honest to get a living by the shrewd manipulations of scales and lead-pencils.

The business of Jew-baiting in those unenlightened, backward parts of the earth was thus very easily conducted. If the peasant found his resentfulness getting too much for him and decided to take things into his own hands, his course was simple and his cause intelligible. The Jew was not only contemptible for believing wicked things and flouting sacred things and doing wicked deeds; he was conveniently marked out from the rest of humanity. One knew what he looked like and where to find him. He was pretty apt to be either in the market-place or at his prayers, and in either case he was not likely to be mistaken for somebody else. At the synagogue one ran no risk of unintentionally strangling the Christian policeman who stood watch at the door under the impression that he was a Jew. Even in business hours the Jew wore a caftan, while honest men wore ulsters of homespun. Moreover, he did not shave his beard or his ear-locks. And if the work was to be done in the stillness of the night, the

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procedure was simplified still more, because the Jews obligingly congregated in separate quarters of their own.

We, for our part, took the whole state of things, as I say, as a matter of course. It is truly astonishing how much the human creature can put up with when once it has made up its mind that there is no other way. We had been born to our fate, and it was no good complaining. One might as well complain because he was not born wealthy or because he cannot fly. Besides, the process had gone on too long to have in it the sting of uncomfortable novelty. We had been hooted and mocked and spat upon before these people's very name had been heard in the world. They were no more than a way-station in our exile. We were the wanderers, but we were eternal, and we were not going to be exiles forever. There were rewards—in the future. Babylon and Rome, as the sad-proud song had it, Egypt and Spain, what were they now? Our day was yet to dawn. And the thought of that glorious afterward sometimes made us sorry for the sinful souls of our own number who, lacking courage to stick it out, had fallen away from the faith. They fared no better than the rest of us; and it seemed a pity that they should lose out both ways, even if they were renegades.

§ 2

From this background and from these surroundings my emergence into the tolerant atmosphere of the Western world seemed like a new birth. No hooligans and no riots, no discriminations and no special laws. It was dazzling. But I was baffled. This new world was Christian, too. It called itself Christian, anyhow. But what was Christianity if it was not Jew-hunting? That was what the word had always meant to me. Still, there it was, incredible, but true. We could go where we chose and do what we liked, and we were left alone, just like other people. And these other people who said they were Christians were very remarkable. A Christian was a stupid, ignorant peasant who was clad in homespun, stole things when you were not looking, crossed himself on the least provocation, ate coarse food, and had a propensity for killing folks. These new neighbors of mine were nothing like that. They were almost indistinguishably like ourselves. They were, if anything, more intelligent and in general more up-to-date than we were. They dressed and ate and lived and apparently thought as we did. No wonder they did not try to persecute us. They would have had a hard time telling a Jew from one of their own. If they *were* Christians, and did differ from us, the difference was too fine for anybody to see. And, of course, you could not chase after a man in a crowd without knowing what he looked like.

That was what I thought. And as a first result of this free life, little by little, I actually ceased to be a Jew. The one real barrier between my neighbor and me melted away as by magic. Now that no one minded my believing and practising my ancient faith, I began to realize that it was not my faith at all. What the assaults and persecutions of centuries failed to do was done by mere peaceful toleration in a moment of time. Contact with new people and a new world brought it home to me very sharply that what I deeply and passionately

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believed in had nothing to do with that religion which had come to me by inheritance and had stuck to me because people tried to deprive me of it by force. At least that was how I felt. I was much more genuinely interested in human freedom and human rights than I was in the manner of butchering animals for food or in a certain ruined wall in the City of Jerusalem which I had never seen. So also was my new neighbor next door. And the fact that we shared the most vital interests between us made me pause and think whether the Christianity he professed could be so wicked, after all, as I had once been led to believe. I dipped into his sacred books and found without much surprise that they gave me not the least offense.

The differences between us, I saw with relief, had been dragged down from a world which was dead, and thrust between us by people with an ax to grind, just to hold us apart. They no longer existed. It was not that I disliked being a Jew. There was no reason why I should in a world where Jews were equals with other people. It was rather painful to part with old beliefs and old associations. Sometimes, too, a childhood memory flashed through my mind, and I thought with a pang that I was backsliding, and that my penalty would surely come; that I would lose both this world and the next. All the same I persisted. I was not losing this world, but making myself a citizen of it, and I no longer concerned myself with doubtful tales of the next one.

§ 3

But before long I came up with a start. The old game was not dead. I no sooner began to feel at home in my new surroundings than the thing began to crop up all around me. In applications for humble work it was not uncommon to be told that Jews were not wanted. As a student at college I discovered that certain organizations excluded Jews from membership. On two separate occasions, after graduation, I failed to obtain teachers' positions as soon as I let it be known that I was of Jewish parentage. For the most part these discriminations and exclusions were carried out privately. But now and then they were trumpeted abroad from the printed page and the public platform. Certain popular prints consistently maintained an anti-Jewish policy. Once at a lecture I heard a noted agnostic orator refer to a number of his Jewish colleagues, who were engaged in the same propaganda as he was, but who had evidently displeased him, as "these accursed Jews." And another time, at a mountain inn, where I had pleasantly spent the better part of a summer, an elderly lady with whom I had become friends confided to me that she preferred the place to many others because it "rigidly kept out Jews."

Encounters of this sort horrified and amused me at the same time. But they bewildered me even more. What was all this Jew pother about? It was not religious, surely. This was not eastern Europe, where every Jew was a Jew. Here the Jew was no Jew, and the Christian was no Christian. The religious line had either broken down entirely or had got badly twisted. Too many of the newer creeds, like Christian Science and New Thought and Ethical Culture, numbered among their supporters the former adherents

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of both the old dispensations. It would require an expert theologian to see the exact difference between a Unitarian and a pew-holder in a reformed temple, and the current drift toward unbelief had affected all the traditional faiths alike. Half the people, certainly half the cultivated people, that one ran into between Vienna and San Francisco would have hesitated to label themselves as either Jew or Christian.

The new Jew-baiting could not feed on religion and remain sane, and it could not safely feed on anything else. There was nothing else to feed on. A Jew in Russia or Galicia could be hounded or snubbed on religious grounds because the Jew there really was a Jew. But a Jew in Germany or France or England or the United States was as likely as not an atheist or a Swedenborgian. Therefore any sneering at his religion will either not hurt him, or it will hurt others. And when you can't sneer at his religion, it becomes increasingly difficult to find the grounds for sneering at all. There may be other Jewish traits that are far more contemptible than the Jewish religion. Nobody says there are not. But the great difficulty is to lay your finger on them. That is the disadvantage of being an enemy of an entire people at this late date and in a civilized country. Your quarry has got hopelessly lost among the rest of humanity. My own embarrassing experiences tell me that not one person in a hundred knows a Jew when he sees one.

The Jewish look and the Jewish manner are myths. It must tax the imagination of the best-trained Jew-baiter to think of Lord Reading and of a fishwife underneath the Williamsburg Bridge possessing the same manner. Why, the very Jewish name has ceased to be trustworthy. A Jewish relief society recently addressed itself to a Mr. Jacob Goldstein somewhere in Texas with the request that he accept the chairmanship of the local committee during a collection campaign. Mr. Goldstein was touched by the proffered honor, but he was, unfortunately, not a Jew. He was good enough, however, to refer the society to the man who was the leading Jewish merchant of the place and whose name was Columbus Smith.

What puzzles and amuses me is not that certain non-Jews persist in disliking what is unamiable in some Jews or even in all Jews. I was born a Jew, and I dislike a great variety of things about a great variety of Jews. Also I dislike these same things in other people who are not Jews. The odd thing is that the typical Jew-baiter always begins by telling me that he is too modern and too tolerant to have anything against the Jewish religion, and then proceeds to give what he dignifies as reasons for disliking Jewishness. The only possible thing that a man with his head in the right place would dream of calling Jewishness is obviously the Jew's creed. That is, or was, the only thing that a majority of Jews have, or used to have, in common.

Jewishness as a system of thought or action or as a way of life may very well be hateful to the people of some country or even to the people of the whole world. I do not for a moment mean to deny that that is not possible. I do not even argue that it is inexcusable. That sort of thing is too common. I know of no country in the world where some system of thought or

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conduct is not regarded with aversion by the majority of the population. Only, as a rule, the system that is execrated in one place is deeply cherished in another. The principal distinction of Judaism is that it is not deeply cherished anywhere. It is one of the rare things that the whole Christian world is solidly united on. But its greatest distinction of all is that Judaism is never the same thing in the eyes of any two villages.

§ 4

Now, there is nothing in itself unreasonable about hating anything. I myself, for instance, hate Junkerism with all my heart. So, I believe, does every other right-thinking and freedom-loving man. But I know pretty definitely what Junkerism is, and there is nearly complete agreement between all those who hate it as to its meaning. It means blood and iron and sword-rattling and the right of the mighty and bugaboo. It means just that not only to me, but the world over. It is a clean-cut, well knit system. Any human being who prizes peace and decency and the right naturally hates such a system. But Judaism is not a clean-cut, well knit system. It does not mean the same thing to all those who pretend to dislike it. It is disliked on every ground imaginable. From the first century to the twentieth and from Russia to the United States there is scarcely a human vice, and scarcely a human virtue, that has not somewhere, at some time been forged into an excuse by the Jew-baiter.

The Jew has never been positively and passionately loved in any age or in any clime, but that is not the striking thing about him. The striking thing is that what is considered the black infamy of the Jew in one place is commonly the very reverse of his black infamy in another. There would have been nothing startling if he had been tortured as a usurer in the Middle Ages. There is perhaps some sense in torturing usurers. But his martyrdom acquires a touch of the comic when he, the same Jew, is suppressed for rebelling against the usurious civilization of the modern Mammon. In his earlier days he was massacred for being exclusive, and now he is snubbed for being too obtrusive. In some countries they hate him for being a dangerous, visionary idealist, and in others because he is a gross, calculating materialist. In Rumania the peasant despises him as an aristocrat with genteel manners, and in New York he is avoided as an unmannerly boor. Throughout the ages he has suffered as the crucifier of the Christ; it will not surprise me if in the next age he is made to suffer for having produced the Christ.

No other man has ever been in such a fix. It has often happened that a person found himself at odds with the people about him. Well, he had nothing to do but to emigrate to some other place, where the ruling majority agreed with him. A Calvinist could leave King Charles Stuart and go to Holland. A Russian democrat could part with the czar and be received with open arms in England or in Switzerland. The German rebels against Junkerism might run away to America. In no case was the refugee disappointed. The Calvinist did not arrive in Amsterdam to find that he was suspected of being a Romanist. The Russian was not clapped into

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jail at Bern on a charge of plotting to overthrow the Swiss Republic to make room for a monarchy on the czarist model. The American Government did not detain Carl Schurz at Ellis Island as an emissary of Prussianism. Yet if all these things had happened, they would only have illustrated the fate of the Jew in his eternal wanderings.

It was, I confess, altogether natural that the Jew in the chivalrous, Christian Middle Ages should be despised as a usurer, if he was one. But then it would appear just as natural that he should be made into a saint in the modern world which rests on a system of usury. I believe that the peasant back home did honestly scorn refinement and good manners; therefore he disliked us who had them. But in that case we ought to expect to be fêted in those Western countries where such things are appreciated. It is a little discouraging to be told that Jews share a common spirit and culture, and in the next breath to be informed that we are at once Chesterfields and Calibans, the spiritual kin at once of Judas and Jesus.

Observation tells me that our own faults, of which we have many, are only a small part of the reason why we are not taken in among our neighbors. People saddle us even with the weaknesses that they dislike in themselves. I have often asked Americans what it was they found objectionable in the Jew, and the answers were a revelation. The Jew, they told me, is over-aggressive; he is fond of noise and show, he is indifferent to spiritual values, he worships the dollar, and his social intercourse is crude. All of which is an excellent summary of what Europe has been rightly or wrongly throwing up against Americans for three generations, an excellent summary, too, of the charges the Americans applaud their own novelists for making.

The practice of nagging one another is far from uncommon among men and women. There are family scrapes and lovers' quarrels, disagreements across the court and over the fence. But as a rule, when people dislike one another, it is for what they are and as persons. At least that is the case in peace-times. If I dislike my neighbor it is because I do not like *him* personally, and I would like him no better if his politics and his religion and all the rest of it were the reverse of what they are. I do not whip myself into a passion and tear around shouting, "Oh, the insufferable Presbyterian! I 'd like to exterminate his miserable sect. I always did hate Presbyterians."

But let a man take an aversion to a Jew, and the situation is altogether different. The Jew may really be a disagreeable fellow. There are disagreeable Jews. He may be a rounder or an unscrupulous child-sweater or a wife-beater or a libertine or disputatious socialist. I myself, unhappily, know Jews of all these varieties. Also I know non-Jews of the same description. And if my man is a well behaved Christian citizen, he will quite naturally find the Jew in question objectionable. Any well behaved, decent citizen would. Well, so long as the object of his distaste remains unlabeled, so long as his Jewish origin is unknown, my good citizen will simply despise him for his sins and his shortcomings. But should he by any chance discover that the man is a Jew, ah! then all will be changed. His indignation will rise to vast heights,

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but the individual enemy will be almost forgotten. The plain citizen will suddenly develop into a philosopher and a race psychologist, while the disagreeable fellow next door will just as suddenly become the scion and accomplice of an evil tribe. The awful and important thing about him will be not that he is infamous in himself, but that he is a Jew. And my good man will remember that he always did have a horror of Jews, and will vow to shun the breed forever.

§ 5

What I have in mind is handily illustrated by the Jew on the stage and in fiction. Molière's *Tartuffe* is a consummate hypocrite, and everybody who has seen or read the play in which he figures has no doubt thought of some acquaintance who resembled him like a twin brother. But we have yet to hear of the slanderer who would insinuate that *Tartuffe* is France because *Tartuffe* is a Frenchman. Every one with a grain of sense in him knows that the reason why *Tartuffe* is a Frenchman is that Molière was a Frenchman. If the author had been a German, *Tartuffe* would have been a German. The same is true of many other figures in literature. They are human types, but they do not portray the character of a nation. The central character in H. G. Wells's "Tono-Bungay" is a somewhat ridiculous money-grubber who thinks he is a Napoleon. He is an Englishman, of course; but people of all nationalities know that they can duplicate the noble hero in their own countries. But to the same people *Shylock* is not a mere scoundrel. He is not even just *a* Jew. He is *the* Jew. For it is an incorrigible obsession of many folks that *the* Jew is as black as *any* Jew is painted. And the killing thing is that the Jews have so long been fed up with this kind of madness that they are commonly the first to raise the cry that the Jew in play and story is a slander, which is a sorry admission that he represents them, only that he represents them discreditably. The loud complaints about the stories of Mr. Glass and certain of the plays of Mr. Gordin are familiar illustrations. To my knowledge, neither the English nor the French people have undertaken to disown either *Tartuffe* or the talented concocter of *Tono-Bungay*.

My good friend at the mountain inn, as I might have known, had nothing whatever against the Jewish people. She avoided them at summer resorts, she said, merely because of their gross manners and their love of making themselves conspicuous. And this testimony of hers was seconded by the keeper of the inn himself, as well as by many other keepers of inns. Now, I know there are Jews with bad manners, shiploads of them. It may even be that all Jews have bad manners. But how can any one know? And there is a lot of evidence of fact to the contrary, which any one acquainted with half a dozen Jews must be aware of. I can only insist that I am unable to discover an inevitable, logical connection between Jewishness and unmannerliness.

If our friends are going to discriminate against Jews on such arbitrary grounds as breeding, they may as well and as reasonably burn them at the stake for their wealth or their politics. The connection between these things and Jewishness is fully as real. Mr. Adolph Ochs is a Jew who is both rich

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and conservative; and Mr. Abraham Cahan, who is also a Jew, is both poor and a radical. I do not know anything about the manners or the morals of either of them, but I do know that if I disliked bad manners, I would be obliged to snub a considerable portion of the human species who are themselves neither Jews nor lovers of Jews. It is quite possible that the hope of humanity is largely dependent on the discouragement (by innkeepers and their guests) of unrefinement on the one hand and of Jewishness on the other. I do not say that it is not. All I say is that the words unrefinement and Jewishness do not mean exactly the same thing, and that if one must have a reason for discouraging Jewishness, one had better dig up some villainy that is really, unmistakably, exclusively Jewish. Otherwise one may end up in a wilderness of absurdities.

Nevertheless, I am not so blind as not to see that there is, after all, a rather good case for the innkeeper—or shall I call him, as the law now requires, the president of the Lake Quiet Club? And that case, I am constrained to state in the interest of truth, even at the risk of losing caste with my fellow-Jews and suffering religious and social excommunication at their hands. My Jewish friends constantly and bitterly protest that the hotel clerk never inquires about Mrs. Gentile's manners when she writes for reservations. Well, for that matter, neither does he inquire about Mrs. Jew's. But, complain my friends, how does he know that Mrs. Gentile is a desirable guest and that Mrs. Jew is not, when he has not seen either of them? The answer, I think, is that he does *not* know. He is taking a gamble in probabilities. For all he knows the two ladies may be exactly equal in refinement and culture. Only the chances are that Mrs. Gentile won't apply if she is not of the set, and the chances are equally as large that Mrs. Jew will apply *because* she is not of the set. This is all the clerk vaguely knows—that Mrs. Jew is, in the social relations, a consistent democrat who refuses to acknowledge the existence of classes and distinctions. And this is enough.

Supposing, ruminates the hotel clerk charged with keeping up the tone of the resort—supposing that Mrs. Jew's antecedents, manners, and gentility are not the least bit beneath those of Mrs. Gentile's, one need have no fears that Mrs. Gentile's butcher or Mr. Gentile's tailor will follow her to her summer retreat. But one cannot be so sure about the other lady's retinue of undesirables. It is not only Mrs. Jew who is indifferent to social snobbism. The whole Jewish people are. The Jew, as the saying is, is your only Christian. The Jew has, by centuries of hard knocks, come to perceive and acknowledge a distinction between himself and the others. But within the Pale he has never known and he can never understand any differences. He has learned the lesson his neighbor has so long tried to teach him, that a Jew is a Jew, and he never can be got to forget it. If Mr. Disraeli becomes Lord Beaconsfield, every Jew will rejoice not only on Mr. Disraeli's account, but principally on his own. All Jews are equal; therefore, when one Jew is an aristocrat, all Jews are aristocrats. The Jew who becomes king of the new Jerusalem will have to keep perpetual open house or abdicate. No Jew can take

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on airs among his own and carry it off.

That is why I have so little sympathy or patience with the persons who are at pains to hide their Jewish identity in the presence of non-Jews. I cannot understand their fears. If I were inclined to deny my origin for the sake of avoiding annoyance or persecution, it is with my own that I would be wary. The worst injury the Gentile can do me is to leave me alone, and that I can manage to endure. But my fellow-Jew will not leave me alone. As long as he mistakes me for the stranger, he will scrupulously respect my right to privacy, and ring the bell of my door before he invades my home, and give heed to the amenities of decent society after he has entered, and pay cash for the goods I sell him, without expecting undue favor, and in general deal with me equitably and humanely. But just as soon as he has spotted me, my freedom ceases to be. He will, so to speak, embrace me fraternally and gather me to his bosom. He will feel thoroughly at ease with me and quite at home in my house, and he will unbend chummily and unburden himself of his fears and his hopes, and he will keep me waiting longest when I come into his shop and least when he sends out his bills. I am but a fellow-Jew, while the others are people. I am a member of the family, so I can put up with the leavings when strangers are calling.

My Gentile friends are a bit puzzled when I implore them to guard the secret of my identity against the Jewish tradespeople of the neighborhood. They suspect me of attempted snobbishness toward a fellow-creature and a coreligionist. But it is only one of the many evidences of their fortunate ignorance of the really dreadful enormities of my people.

I am frankly blurting out this bit of family history in the interests of truth and justice, not as a sufficient excuse for keeping the Jew away from mountain inns. But I suppose it will be expected of me, before I leave off, to offer some explanation for the position of the Jew among the nations. After all, it is a fact, and every fact has a cause; and if the Jew is no wickeder than the rest of mankind, why is the world no friendlier to him? Ah, but he is wickeder, far wickeder. Also he is immeasurably nobler. There you have the central point of him in a nutshell. He is simply a more vivid personality than the other races of earth. He *is* conspicuous; not because he loves to be, but because he cannot help it. The first thing that I had to do in order to become like other Americans was to tone down the dramatic quality in my make-up, to become more drab and less vital. When the Jew is commercial he is more commercial than anybody else; when he learns the bad habits of his neighbors he outdoes them in evil, and when he catches a new vision of God he goes out and converts the universe. In addition he carries about with him a long tradition of un-love and he has a name that everybody knows. It is human to pick on some one, and he is ready at hand, and he is used to being picked on. He fills an ever felt want.

For this reason I disclaim any intention to argue against the time-honored practice of Jew-ragging. It would do no good to argue against it. The thing has become one of the fixed institutions of civilization. The world we all know and all love would not be itself without it. Some day, perhaps,

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a revolution of mind and heart will sweep this institution with many another into the limbo of the dead past. But it will be, I am convinced, a long time coming. And in the meantime the Jew will remain among us not a mere human creature with unlovely qualities, but a sort of abstract symbol of antipathy, an embodiment, in the eyes of the world, of everything that it dislikes in itself and in its social system. But he has already become more than that. He has become the conscience of Western civilization, the weather-vane of its progress, the gage by which its own wickedness or humanity is measured. The status of the Jew in any country is a foot-rule to its enlightenment. And as long as a trace of the ancient blot remains anywhere, the world will not be ready for brotherhood and the earth unprepared for peace.

§ 6

As I review the bundle of contradictions and paradoxes that make up the arraignment of the Jew and mark the anti-Semitic program, I begin to wonder whether his accusers are aware of the real animus that moves them. I am not questioning their sincerity. But I venture the guess that a single subconscious impulse lies beneath each separate charge, fathering them all, and explaining the apparent paradoxes. Somewhere there must be a real case that Western civilization has against the Jew. Otherwise a rational civilization would not persist in the making of so many contradictory and mutually destructive charges against him.

I think I know what that real case is, the thing that Western civilization really holds against the Jew. It is simply this: the Jew has inflicted Christianity on the Aryan civilization of the Occident. By giving us the Gospels, with their humanitarian aspirations, by setting up the gentle ideal of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jew has set a brake on the free operation of the vigorous impulses of Western civilization which, while professing Christianity, is actually materialistic in its desires and Nietzschean in its moral standards. He has hobbled this pagan world with a conscience. For twenty centuries Western civilization has struggled desperately to evade the full obligations of Christianity. And it subconsciously hates the race from whose loins Christianity came.

An employer of labor, with red Aryan blood in his veins, is about to go forth and smash a hundred thousand strikers, when up surges a memory from his Sunday-school boyhood to warn him that men are brothers and the poor blessed. Statesmen and generals, in the thick of war, are obliged to kneel before the altar of Him who said "Blessed are the peacemakers." Men questing after wealth are arrested in their path by the admonition, "Take no thought for the morrow." Is it any wonder we resent the Jew? His contribution to our civilization is a spirit that sours and curdles those primitive and pagan desires that unhappily survive with strangely dominant force throughout our "Christian" world.

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